

Goals for this Session

Define

Define Family Engagement

Discuss

Discuss why Family Engagement is important

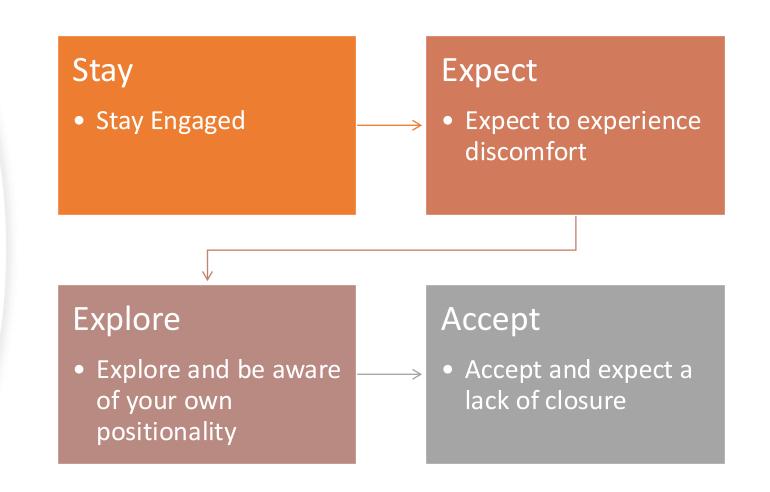
Identify

Identify the "New Normal" for Family Engagement and the conditions for effective practice

Expand

Expand your capacity to engage in effective family engagement practice

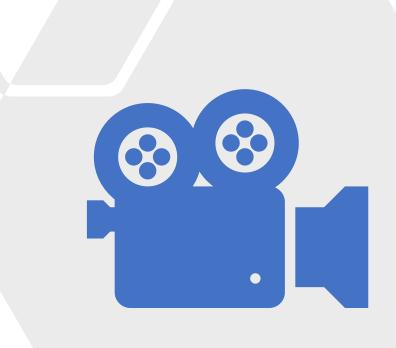
Community Learning Norms



Defining Family Engagement

Small Group Discussion: 10 minutes – Identify someone in your group to report out.

What struck you in this video of Jessica — is there anything she said or did that stood out? What are your noticings/wonderings? What are your take-aways?



CT State Department of Education Definition of Family Engagement

Family Engagement is a *full, equal, and equitable partnership* among families,
educators and community partners to promote
children's learning and development from birth
through college and career.



Family Involvement

Involvement versus Engagement

- Focuses on individual responsibility
- Communication to families is oneway
- Space for listening is a low priority
- Focuses on programming, not people
- Relationship is transactional

- Focuses on collective responsibility and partnership
- Communication with families is twoway and listening is prioritized
- Family knowledge is valued and honored
- Focuses on collaborative practice
- Relationship is transformative

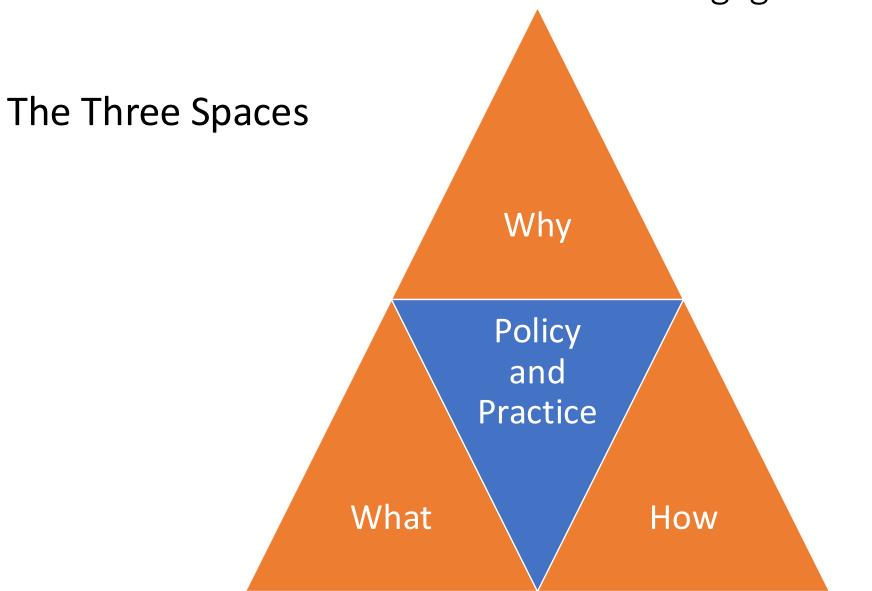
Ron
Covington:
Involvement
versus
Engagement



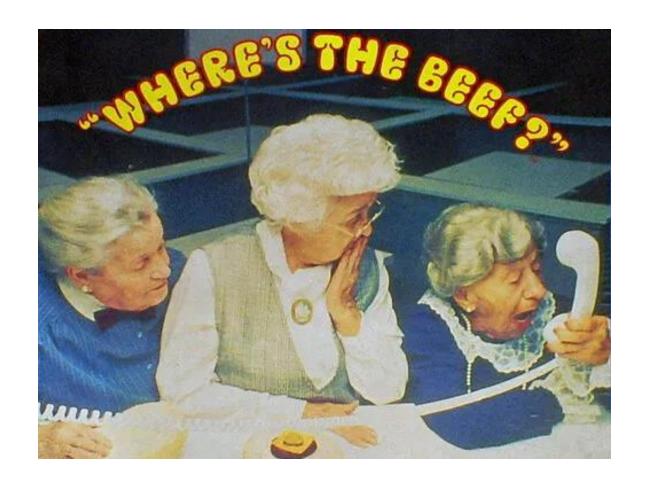
Larry
Ferlazzo,
author and
public school
teacher

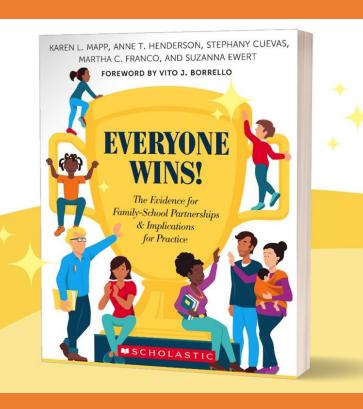
"A school striving for **family** involvement often leads with its mouth—identifying projects, needs, and goals and then telling parents how they can contribute. A school striving for family engagement, on the other hand, tends to lead with its ears—listening to what parents think, dream, and worry about. The goal of family engagement is not to serve clients but to gain partners."

Shift from Involvement to Engagement



Why is Family Engagement Important?





Everyone Wins! - Fifth installment of the *Evidence* series

20 years since the publication of *A New Wave of Evidence*

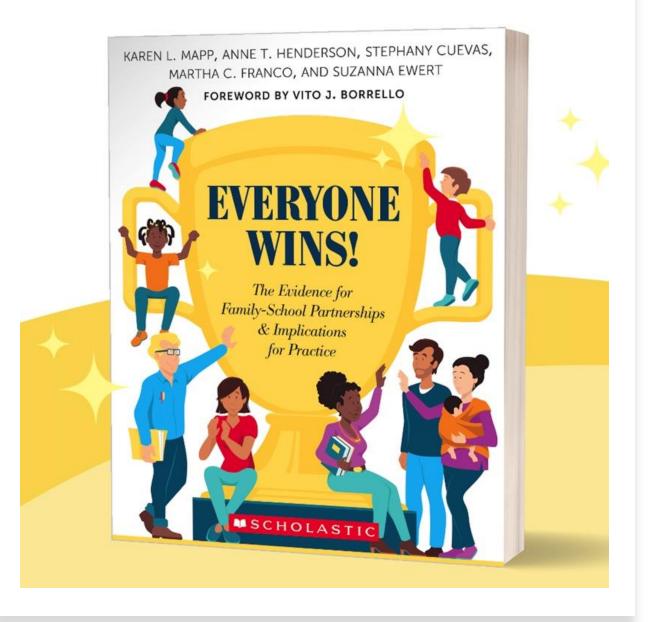
Selected 40 studies out of over 100 reviewed

Studies span from 2002-2021

Extra! Extra!

Two Big Headlines from our review of the 40 studies





1) Home—school partnerships benefit not only our students, but also educators, families, schools, districts, and communities.

2) We know the conditions for high impact practice.

Wins for Students

- Higher grades and test scores
- Better attendance and engagement in class
- More positive attitudes and behavior
- Greater sense of efficacy and self-esteem
- Higher graduation rates and college/postsecondary attendance



Wins for Educators:

- Shift from deficit-to asset-based thinking about students and families
- Increased multicultural awareness and appreciation
- Greater success motivating and engaging students
- More support from families
- Stronger morale and professional satisfaction



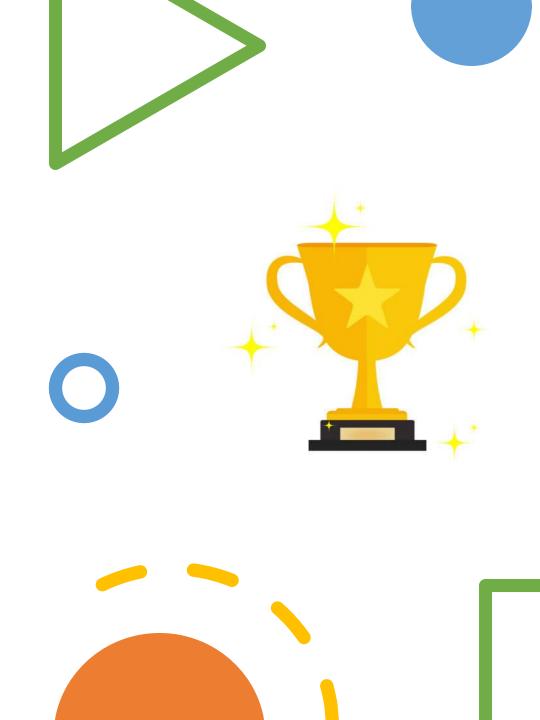
Wins for Families

- Stronger parent-child relationships
- Better rapport with teachers and school staff
- Greater understanding of child's progress and how to help
- More knowledge and skill in advocating for their child
- Increased deep and supportive social connections



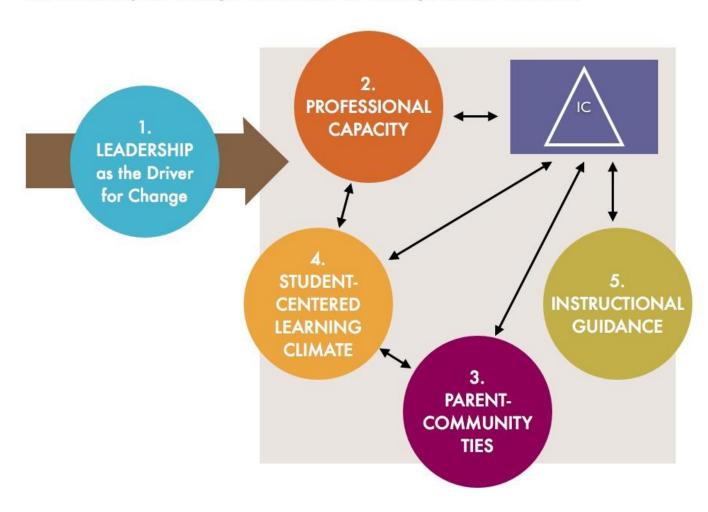
Wins for Schools

- More positive school climate
- Higher morale and greater retention of teachers
- Improved facilities, better curriculum, and higher-quality programs
- More responsive to community concerns
- Better reputation and more support from the community



FIVE ESSENTIAL SUPPORTS

The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research



The 5Essentials



The Characteristics of a School **Considered Strong in the 5Essentials**

Effective Leaders

faculty and staff.

Supportive

Environment

Principals and teachers work together to implement a shared vision for sustained improvement. Leaders practice shared leadership, set ambitious goals for quality instruction, maintain trusting and respectful relationships, and support professional advancement for

The school is safe, demanding, and supportive. Students feel safe in and around the school and they find teachers trust-worthy and responsive to their academic needs. Students value hard work and teachers push all students toward high academic performance.

Collaborative Teachers

All teachers collaborate to promote professional growth; are active partners in school improvement. Teachers are committed to the school and focused on professional development.

Ambitious Instruction

Classes are challenging and engaging. The instruction is clear, well-structured, aligned across grade levels, and encourages students to build and apply knowledge. When combined with a Supportive Environment, Ambitious Instruction has the most direct effect on student learning.

Involved **Families**

The entire school staff builds strong relationships with parents/quardians and are seen as partners in helping students learn. Parent/guardian input and participation is valued in advancing the school's mission.

"Arguing for the significance of one individual support over another is tempting, but we ultimately came to view the five supports as an organized system of elements in dynamic interaction with one another. As such, primary value lies in their integration and mutual reinforcement. In this sense, school development is much like baking a cake...Without sugar, it will be tasteless. Without eggs or baking powder, the cake will be flat and chewy...if one ingredient is absent, it is just not a cake. "



Wins for Districts and Communities

- Reduced suspensions and high-risk behaviors
- Increased family and youth involvement in site-based decisions
- Expanded mental and physical health resources leading to improved health
- High levels of participation in afterschool programs
- Increased high school graduation rate



What Does
Effective Family
Engagement Look
Like?



We have a choice about this crisis. As educators, we can make our "new normal" better than the old, engaging parents as the partners they are. Or we can wait for parents to lose whatever faith in us remains. They cannot unsee what they have witnessed so vividly in their own living rooms.

Dr. Sonja Santelises CEO, Baltimore Public Schools

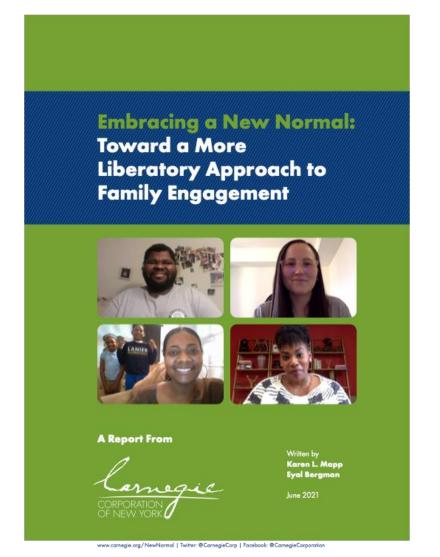


The New Normal of Family Engagement is:

Liberatory

Solidarity-driven

Equity-focused

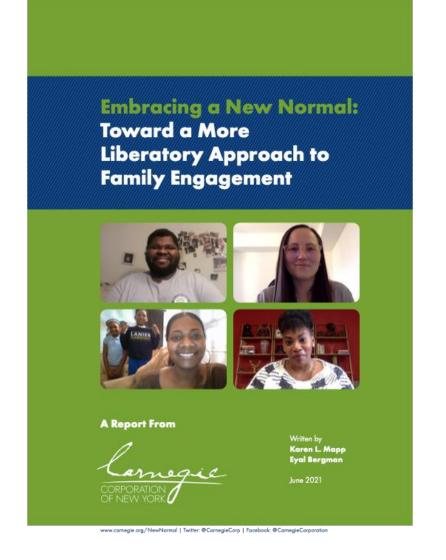


Turn-and-Talk: What do these terms mean to you?

Liberatory

Solidarity-driven

Equity-focused



How do we do it? Where do we start?



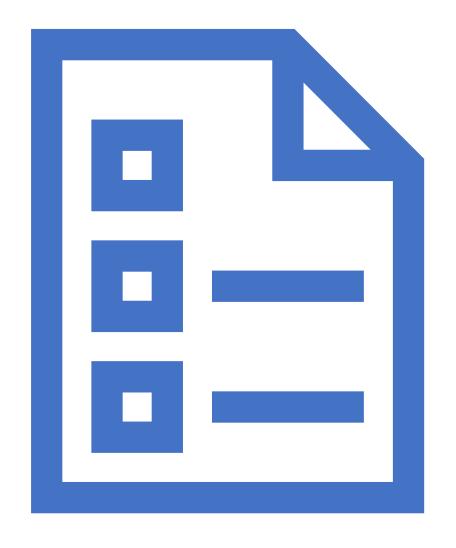


We start with our own core beliefs

Our core



Core Beliefs Survey



Core Belief One

 All families have dreams for their children and want the best for them.

"...I believe that all parents hold big expectations for the role that schools will play in the life chances of their children. They all harbor a large wish list of dreams and aspirations for their youngsters. All families care deeply about their children's education and hope that their progeny will be happier, more productive, and more successful than they have been in their lives. " (Lightfoot, 2003)

Core Belief Two

All families have the capacity to support their children's learning.



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Resources: a stock or supply of money, materials, staff, and other assets that can be drawn on by a person or organization in order to function effectively.

Resources vs Capacity



Capacity: the ability or power to do, experience, or understand something.

Core Belief Three

Families and school/program staff should be equal partners.



Core Belief Four

 The responsibility for building and sustaining partnerships between school, home, and community rests primarily with school/program staff, especially school/program leaders.



The moment is meeting the The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family School Partnerships





unheard, and unvalued

Mapp, K. L. & Bergman, E. (2019). Dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships (Version 2). Retrieved from: www.dualcapacity.org

The Challenge



- Have not been exposed to strong examples of family engagement
- Have received minimal training
- May not see partnership as an essential practice
- May have developed deficit mindsets



Families

- Have not been exposed to strong examples of family engagement
- Have had negative past experiences with schools and educators
- May not feel invited to contribute to their children's education
- May feel disrespected, unheard, and unvalued



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Essential Conditions

Process conditions

- Relational: built on mutual trust
- Linked to learning and development
- Asset-based
- Culturally responsive and respectful
- Collaborative
- Interactive

Organizational conditions

- Systemic: embraced by leadership across the organization
- Integrated: embedded in all strategies
- Sustained: with resources and infrastructure

(Version 2)

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What do you do when you want to build trust with another person?

(Version 2)

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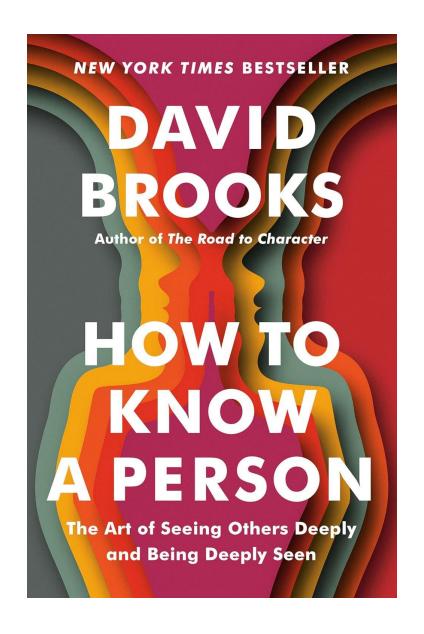
Elements of relational trust

Respect

Competence

Integrity

Personal regard



"Am I a person to you? Do you care about me? Am I a priority to you?" The answers to those questions are conveyed in your gaze before they are conveyed by your words. It's a gaze that radiates respect...Respect is a gift you offer with your eyes.

(Version 2)

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Linked to Learning/Development Exercise

- List at least five events/activities that schools currently have for families (think across the entire school year)
- Circle the activities which fit the following criteria:
 - Families leave knowing what their child should know or be able to do (the learning/developmental goals) at that grade/age level and their standing
 - They leave knowing how (through practice) to employ a new tool or activity at home to support those goals and student success
 - Families had the opportunity to share learning strategies and knowledge about their child with educators

(Version 2)

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(Version 2)



(Version 2)

The Challenge

Essential Conditions

Policy and Program Goals



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Build and enhance the capacity of educators and families in the "4 C" areas:

- Capabilities (skills + knowledge)
- Connections (networks)
- Cognition (shifts in beliefs and values)
- Confidence (self-efficacy)

(Version 2)

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Essential Conditions

Policy and Program Goals

Capacity Outcomes



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Educators are empowered to:

- Connect family engagement to learning and development
- Engage families as co-creators
- Honor family funds of knowledge
- Create welcoming cultures



Families engage in diverse roles:

- Co-creators
- Monitors
- Supporters
- Advocates
- Encouragers
- Models



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Engagement is a STRATEGY, not a GOAL



Shift the conditions for family engagement within your sphere of influence.

Additional Resources

• Free, online course: Family Engagement in Education, The Dual Capacity-Building Framework Harvard PPE Institute, July 20-24, 2025: Family Engagement in Education, Creating Effective Home-School Partnerships



